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According to recent data, wine now generates \$3.5 billion annually and accounts for 17,000 jobs in wine and related businesses in Oregon. Now, that's impact.

And it seems to be growing. Consider our (fairly) recent history:

Wine grapevines apparently entered the Willamette Valley with the earliest (white) settlers. Many of those folks came from European cultures (France, Italy, Germany) in which wine was part of everyday dinners; farm families grew their own grapes, made their own wines and consumed them at their tables. Common histories show wines made in the 1840s; pioneer photographer Peter Britt planted vineyards and started the first commercial winery — Valley View — in Jacksonville in the mid-1850s. And it was good wine.

Then came Prohibition, in 1914 in Oregon, four years before the rest of the nation. Almost overnight, wine disappeared, and the laws prohibited even mention of wine in histories.

So, by the 1960s, it was commonly believed among viticulture professionals and academics that Oregon was too cool, too wet, too *something*, and that vinifera grapes, the source of the noblest wines, would never ripen in this climate.

Luckily for us, two iconoclasts, Richard Sommer and David Lett, forged into the soggy hills and planted their vines. Sommer launched HillCrest near Roseburg; Lett started The Eyrie Vineyards further north and earned the honorific nickname of Papa Pinot. In both cases, the wines were very good.

By the '70s, Oregon had five working wineries. In 2015, according to fast-changing figures, we now have more than 500, with more coming, so fast it's hard to keep current. And the wines are very, very good, especially the pinot noirs, which have garnered global praise, but also a whole range of whites and reds that thrive not only in the cooler valleys but, like the so-called "big" reds and whites, want warmer climes (which we have — thank you very much — in abundance) in the Rogue and Columbia valleys.

In this issue of *Uncorked*, we explore aspects of our busy wine legacy, well worth reading: Alex V. Cipolle guides us to Eugene's urban wineries; Amy Schneider examines salmon-safe growing; Camilla Mortensen has fun with wine labels; I explore the renaissance of Oregon chardonnay — and more.

But it could've been much more. That's how grand Oregon wine has grown.

PHOTO BY ALEX V. CIPOLLE



OREGON WINE LAB

**ALAN MITCHELL
OF TERRITORIAL VINEYARDS**

Oregonians go to France for wines and guidance. The French come to Oregon for opportunities to redefine wine. The circle seems to be closing.



PHOTO BY TRASK BEDORTHA

Chardonnay Rising

Move over pinot, Oregon's chardonnays are having a moment in the sun BY LANCE SPARKS



Oregon's best wine? Seems a silly question, at first. Pinot noir? Pinot gris? Nah. One very wine-savvy professional is ready to offer a rather shocking response: chardonnay.

Say what?

If it's even partly true that chardonnay rates as one of Oregon's best wines, the phenomenon could be called a renaissance, a revival, even a re-birth, because Oregon chardonnay had effectively died in the '80s. And it wasn't a pretty demise.

I admit that I was among the early victims of California wine marketers who sold — over-sold, some say — the California style of chardonnay: big, bold, juicy, lotsa oak and butter flavors and enough residual sugar to make a refreshing quaff.

Alan Mitchell, one of the principals of Territorial Vineyards, dubbed those Cal chards “lumberyard wines,” meaning drinking them sometimes tasted like licking a chair leg.

The marketing worked, creating a huge demand; Cal wineries produced and sold millions of cases of oaky, buttery chards. Chardonnay is still America's most popular wine-grape varietal.

Morgan Broadley (Broadley Vineyards, Monroe, makers of some of Oregon's best pinot noirs) says “a lot of bad wine got made” in California and in Oregon, which resulted in the reaction dubbed ABC (Anything But

Chardonnay). Consumers grew tired of wines that tasted over-oaked and flabby.

It's generally agreed that Oregon's growers and winemakers suffered from a clonal problem. The backstory has it that when the post-Prohibition wine pioneers (Lett, Sommer, et al.) were moving toward re-opening Oregon's rocky slopes to grapevines, they consulted with California viticulture experts and were advised to plant chardonnay clones called 108, Wente and Draper. These were chosen for a number of reasons, in part, Mitchell says, because of yield: The Cal growers had had great success with those clones, which are hugely vigorous and easy to ripen, especially in Cal's warm Central Valley.

But they weren't the best clones for the cool, wet climate of western Oregon where, Mitchell says, “you could only ripen it every five years.” The chardonnay wines made from those vines tended to be “green,” acidic and tart, distinctly “hard and unyielding,” in Mitchell's words.

Debate ensued and still rages in what one wag named “the clone wars,” riffing on the *Star Wars* films.

Growers also went back to their sources, looking at France's Burgundy region where pinot noir (red Burgundy) and chardonnay (white Burgundy) grew and ripened side by side. This insight led to the Dijon clone and some very expensive re-planting in Willamette Valley vineyards (growers in Oregon's warm Rogue Valley were having no problems in ripening the 108/Draper clones and still do well with them).

Connecting to a French clone, while valuable to makers of drinkable chardonnay, seems a bit late, since Oregon's real French connection has involved the discovery and colonization of Oregon by talented and passionate French winemakers. That process really began when the Drouhin family bought into the Dundee Hills, establishing Domaine Drouhin Oregon (aka DDO, first vintage 1988).

Véronique Drouhin deserves credit for producing some of Oregon's best chardonnay, the DDO “Arthur.” Dominique Lafon, whom Morgan Broadley calls “the best white winemaker in the world,” has taken Dundee's Evening Land (founded 2007, a Mark Tarlov project) chardonnays to the acme of excellence.

Oregonians go to France for vines and guidance. The French come to Oregon for opportunities to redefine wine styles. The circle seems to be closing.

But the revival of chardonnay in Oregon still stirs debate. In 2012, Paul Durant (Durant Vineyards, Dayton) and Erica Landon (Walter Scott Wines, Salem), both makers of fine chards, launched the annual Oregon Chardonnay Symposium. Since then, the conversations generated among growers and vintners have spurred changes in vineyard management and winemaking, contributing to ongoing improvements and Oregon's revival of America's most popular wine.

Oregon's best? Yet to be determined. Very good? Taste the results (too many to list here). No doubt remains. ❖

Wine & the City

**Eugene's Urban Wine Circuit
hits full bloom with its first Barrel Tour**

BY ALEX V. CIPOLLE

Many a romantic notion is attached to wine, like zooming past the city limits, wind in your hair and finding a sunny patio nestled into the rolling hills of a country winery where you can sip vino and take in the vistas.

Eugene, however, has more tasting rooms in the city than ever before, easily reached by foot, bike, bus or a short drive. In 2013, a few members of the South Willamette Wineries Association (SWWA) started the Urban Wine Circuit, a group of six wineries and tasting rooms that want to “bring the wine country experience into town,” and host wine walks twice a year.

On June 6, the SWWA hosts its first Barrel Tour of the Urban Wine Circuit, in addition to the annual Northern Tour June 13 and Southern Tour June 20. A deluxe charter bus will pick up participants at Valley River Center and shuttle them along the circuit, where each stop will serve three food and wine pairings and a special tasting straight from the barrel. See southwillamettewineries.com for tickets.

Aside from the Barrel Tour, the stops on the Urban Wine Circuit regularly showcase local music and food trucks, as well as provide ample event space for nonprofits, weddings and other functions. Their patios will also be a hotspot for Mother's Day May 10 and Memorial Day weekend. *EW* caught up with the circuit members to find out what drew them to town and what they offer our fair city.



**JONATHAN OBERLANDER OF
J. SCOTT CELLARS IN THE BURGEONING
WESTSIDE WAREHOUSE DISTRICT**
PHOTO BY TRASK BEDORTA

J. Scott Cellars

In 2014, the small boutique wine producer J. Scott Cellars opened its tasting room across the parking lot from Noble Estate in the Westside Warehouse District, an up-and-coming area that also includes Crescendo Organic Spirits, Claim 52 Brewing and Viking Braggot Company, with which J. Scott shares a wall.

Inside, wine barrels are stacked high and the Oberlanders have curated two murals — one a faux Tuscan-villa façade, the other a four-panel scene of rolling wine country.

Owned by Bonnie and Jonathan Oberlander, J. Scott Cellars focuses on “Rhone varietals from the Pacific Northwest,” including roussanne, viognier, petite sirah, syrah, cabernet and a little pinot.

Jonathan Oberlander, who used to make wine for Sylvan Ridge, says there are two reasons he chose the west Eugene location. “I’ve made wine in the country for a very long time. From a practical standpoint, it made sense to do it in town,” he says. “It’s functional for the mechanics of making wine,” adding that he now has access to “good, clean city water.”

The second reason is that it’s closer to his home and the homes of potential visitors. “There’s a lot of people who live in the south hills,” he says.

On July 18, J. Scott Cellars will join the rest of Westside Warehouse District for its 2nd annual block party, which Oberlander estimates more than 800 people attended in 2014. “It’s really beneficial to share resources,” he says.

J. Scott Cellars’ tasting room is open 4 to 9 pm Fridays and 1 to 9 pm Saturdays at 520 Commercial St., Suite G. Hours will expand after Memorial Day. For more info, call 357-5279 or visit jscottcellars.com

Territorial Vineyards

Located at the corner of 3rd and Adams, Territorial has become a bit of a hub for its French oak-barrel-aged pinots, which it makes onsite, and rowdy live music inspiring impromptu dance parties. In the summer, the patio fills with people sipping and noshing, and come August, it marks the northeastern edge of the Whiteaker Block Party. During winter, the tasting room’s wall of windows glow with warmth, beckoning passersby to saunter in for a glass.

When co-owner Alan Mitchell was first trying to open a winery in 2001, he was looking at a rural plot outside Junction City. “We were vineyard people long before we were wine people,” he says. “That’s the first thing you think of is, put it out in the country.” He quickly learned that would be “bloody expensive” and purchased the then-vacant 12,000-square-foot Boyd’s Coffee Warehouse.

“We were able to come into this place and basically build the dream winery on a blank canvas just the way we wanted,” he says. “At the time an urban winery was kind of an oddball thing to do in this country. It’s not that unusual if you look at the world.”

Mitchell says the neighborhood has changed since Territorial put down roots, undergoing a boom of “alcohol purveyors.”

“The Urban Wine Circuit is hopefully a constructive part of that,” he says.

Territorial Vineyards and Wine Company’s Wine Room is open 5 pm until late Wednesday through Saturday at 907 W. 3rd Ave. For more info, call 684-9463 or visit territorialvineyards.com

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Eugene Wine Cellars

"We were the first," says tasting room manager Beverly Biehl of becoming an urban winery. Since Eugene Wine Cellars opened its doors in 1999 it has been a family affair. Biehl's brother Bruce Biehl, who also develops and manages vineyards through his company AREA Inc., had the initial vision for the Whiteaker winery and tasting room. "He'd been to Europe and liked how there were wineries stuck in the middle of cities," Beverly Biehl says.

The Biehls also opened a wine bar — the B-Squared Bistro — in Crescent Village and founded the b2 and Recess labels, which focus on pinot noir and pinot gris. Beverly Biehl says they make wine onsite and do "custom crushes" at Eugene Wine Cellars, so people can bring in their own grapes for pressing.

Eugene Wine Cellars is tucked into a cluster of Madison Street libation peddlers with Wandering Goat Coffee Co. across the street and Oakshire Brewing next door. There is an open-air patio with picnic tables where food trucks frequent and an intimate tasting room with Tuscan-yellow walls and a hodgepodge of furniture. "When people come in here, they find it cozier," Biehl says. "It's not so loud and big."

Eugene Wine Cellars is open 4 to 8 pm Thursday through Sunday, or by appointment, at 255 Madison St. For more info, call 342-2600 or visit eugenewinecellars.com.

Capitello Wines

On Charnelton, the once indigo Lord Leebrick Theater now stands as the sunny yellow home to Capitello Wines, complete with rustic barn doors and windows, patio seating and a parking lot available after 5 pm (no easy feat downtown).

"When I first moved here, it was like, 'Where is downtown?'" says Jennifer Walsh, who runs Capitello with husband Ray Walsh, a former winemaker for King Estate. Now, she says, "there's a new heartbeat here."

Originally what Jennifer Walsh calls a "winery without walls," Capitello Wines took over the building in 2012 — their first brick-and-mortar space — choosing the city over the country to cut down on commute time with their two children and because of its proximity to the Hult, the Hilton and restaurants. "We get a lot of pre- and post-Hult traffic," she says. "We can offer more convenience and artisan wines."

Jennifer Walsh says Capitello is a standout urban wine location because, in addition to pinot noir, they produce sparkling wines and a sauvignon blanc — a special varietal from New Zealand, Ray Walsh's home country. Besides wine, Capitello has a warm ambiance. Inside are high-top tables beneath the original soaring old-beam ceiling and a sculptural slatted bar — both beautiful visions in wood.

Capitello Wines is open noon to 8 pm Wednesday through Saturday at 540 Charnelton St. For more info, call 520-3092 or visit capitellowines.com.



Oregon Wine Lab

Within a two-block radius of Oregon Wine Lab on Lincoln and 5th, there's Capitello Wines to the southeast, The Beanery to the east, Keystone Café to the west and the CiderHouse at WildCraft Cider Works due north.

"It brings the product to the market rather than bringing the market to the product," says Mark Nicholl, owner of Oregon Wine Lab, of the location. "There's a certain amount of environmental friendliness to it."

Nicholl explains that there are two aspects of the lab that make it a distinct wine stop. "I run it like a collective tasting room for wineries that don't have their own tasting room," he says, adding that the focus is on small-batch releases from William Rose Wines — Nicholl's label — as well as wines from Spire Mountain Cellars, La Chouette, Three Acres and Bodner Wine Co. "You're not going to find most of these wines in the Safeway shop."

Oregon Wine Lab is also the only urban tasting room open seven days a week. The lab is a frequent stop on downtown's First Friday ArtWalk, currently showing the bright large-format oil landscapes of Abbas Darabi on the white walls of its minimalist two-story space. The centerpiece is a long slab of maple from Urban Lumber Company topping the wine bar, which Nicholl himself built from wine-barrel slats.

Nicholl says they are expanding the courtyard, tripling the seating capacity outside and allowing more room for food carts, which he soon hopes to have on site seven days a week.

Oregon Wine Lab is open noon to 8 pm Monday through Thursday and Saturdays, noon to 10 pm Fridays and noon to 6 pm Sundays at 488 Lincoln St. For more info, call (458)201-7413 or visit oregonwinelab.com.

Noble Estate Winery

In addition to tasting rooms on Gimpl Hill Road and in Yachats, in 2012 Noble Estate opened a tasting room in the Westside Warehouse District off West 11th because it outgrew its other space. Noble's marketing manager Amy Shadell says they chose the warehouse district because it was still close to the Noble vineyard, while bringing a presence to the city, making it accessible to more casual vino enthusiasts.

"Wine is not just a snobby thing," Shadell says. "It's for everyone."

It's as easily accessible by bike as it is by car, Shadell adds. "You can actually bike from one end of the Urban Wine Circuit to here," she says, pointing to the Fern Ridge bike path nearby.

The space is expansive — they make and store wine on site — with a large tasting room filled with dozens of wooden tables and chairs and an event space in back. While more industrial, the tasting room and outdoor seating area overlook a wild grassy field, bringing a more country feel to the district.

Shadell says that a unique aspect of Noble Estates is its large wine list including pinot, chardonnay, cabernet, viognier, merlot, malbec, riesling and muscat. "We do a huge range of wines — 15 to 20 wines," she says. "We work really hard to make award-winning wines that appeal to lots of palates." Shadell adds that owner and winemaker Mark Jurasevich is "prone to improv tours" of the space.

Noble Estate Winery's urban tasting room is open 5 to 10 pm Fridays and Saturdays at 560 Commercial St. For more info, call 954-9870 or visit nobleestatewinery.com.

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Label Love

Nothing says 'drink me'
like a puppy or pony

BY CAMILLA MORTENSEN

I'm no oenophile. Don't get me wrong, I like wine, but its niceties are lost on me, perhaps because in my college years my idea of "good wine" was strawberry Boones Farm, preferably after it had sat in the freezer long enough to give it a certain Slurpee-like texture.

I'm still that chick who, when asked what I'd like to drink at an elegant restaurant, responds, "Give me your cheap red."

Still, there are some occasions when I'm in charge of the beverages, and I recognize my go-to drink of whiskey is not what others want to imbibe. So I resort to my mental wine-buying flow chart: Is it under \$15? Does it have a cute label? And finally, does the description make it sound drinkable? Extra points if the wine is actually under \$10 and more points for a screw cap because it's likely I will forget a corkscrew.

My logic goes something like this: I'm not going to spend a bunch of money on something I don't appreciate, so let's keep it cheap. I like puppies. I like ponies. Clearly the winemaker who put a cute horse or a cartoon dog on the label and I have something in common. Ergo, I will like the wine.

As it turns out, I'm not that far off: Research by Cornell University professor Brian Wansink shows that wine drinkers are influenced by the labels. For example, drinkers rated a Charles Shaw (aka Two-Buck Chuck) wine higher when they were told it was from Noah's Winery in California than they did when told that same winery was in North Dakota.

Speaking of Two-Buck Chuck, let's add to my flowchart the caveat that I also rate "independent" and "buy local(ish)" high on my wine scale. I say local(ish) because our area wines aren't as focused on puppies and ponies as I am. Don't get me wrong — my more wine-oriented friends love King Estate, and Sweet Cheeks gets the *Portlandia* award for putting a bird on it, but my default wine, despite its lack of screwtop, is 14 Hands Hot to Trot red blend (\$14) from Washington's Columbia Valley — it's got wild horses on the label, a clever name and I can afford it. The wine is described as "aromas of cherry, red currant and tea. Flavors of ripe berries and stone fruits." Maybe it's my Boones Farm thing, or maybe it's actually a good wine, but it had me at berries and cherries.

On the puppy side of things, Salem's Honeywood Winery has a line of Dog Gone Wines with names like "Retriever Riesling" (\$14) and "Basset Hound Blackberry" (\$12).

I'm more of a pitbull than a poodle girl, but when the "Poodle Pinot Noir" (\$24) has a "snobby taste and a furry flavor," I get a little tempted to exceed my price limit, especially since the Dog Gone Wines sales are donated to animal rescues. ❖

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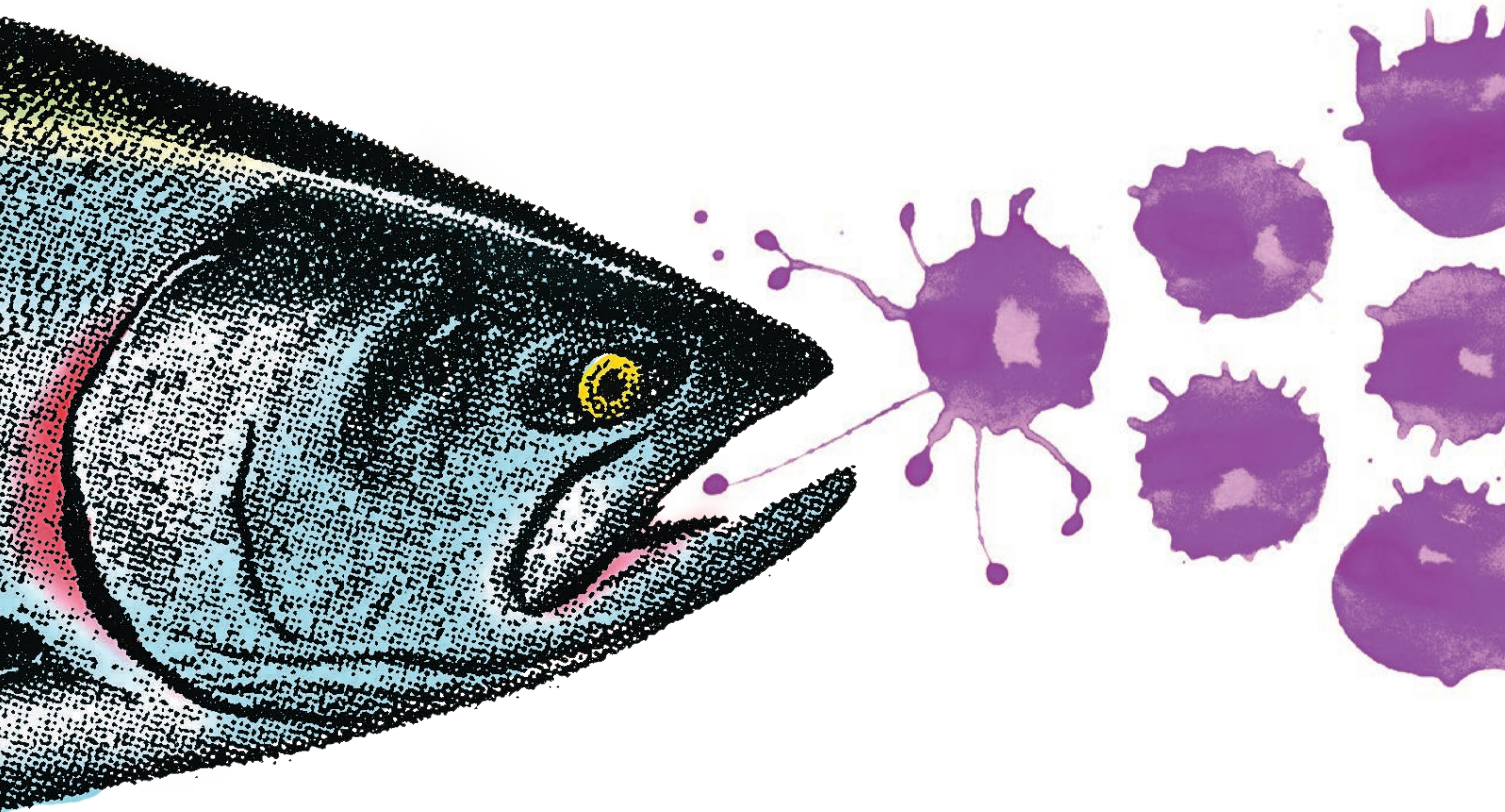


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Fish-Friendly Flow

From King Estate to Pfeiffer Vineyards, sustainable practices in Lane County winemaking

BY AMY SCHNEIDER

A logo with two salmon on your wine bottle doesn't mean the wine pairs well with salmon — it means the wine came from a vineyard certified salmon-safe. Vineyards in the Willamette Valley can have an impact on the water quality of nearby streams, but salmon-safe vineyards go through an extensive certification process that ensures winemakers preserve riparian areas, protect water quality and prevent erosion.

Being sustainable isn't always as straightforward as it seems, and some local vineyards still practice forms of sustainable agriculture without going through the certification process.

About half of the wine-grape acreage in the Willamette Valley is certified salmon-safe, says Dan Kent of Salmon Safe, Inc., a Portland-based nonprofit that works with organizations such as Oregon Tilth and Low Input Viticulture and Enology (LIVE) to encourage sustainable winemaking practices.

Of Lane County's wineries, three names are listed online as salmon-safe: Noble Estate Winery, Territorial Vineyards and King Estate Winery.

"In general, we're trying to promote sustainable agriculture and production," says Ray Nuclo, director of viticulture for King Estate. "We're also certified organic, so most of the things we're doing for that made us within the criteria salmon-safe was requiring."

Nuclo says King Estate keeps soil out of waterways and grows cover crops to maintain soil and prevent erosion along stream banks. He adds that another important element of making King Estate salmon-safe is to keep riparian areas undeveloped and monitor spraying of pesticides.

Pfeiffer Vineyards in Junction City is one of many vineyards in Lane County that doesn't have salmon-safe certification. Danuta Pfeiffer, co-owner of Pfeiffer Vineyards, explains that there are certain tradeoffs associated with being labeled sustainable.

For example, she says, in order to be carbon-neutral, a vineyard might stop using tractors and shift to maintaining the vineyard by hand. Instead of tractors, the vineyard would hire workers, and often the only way to get out to the vineyard is by car.

"They end up using more carbon to come to work than you would see from using a tractor," Pfeiffer says. "You can have your certification, and that's all well and good, but what have you traded off?"

Pfeiffer says that her vineyard is fertilized with fish emulsion, and mildew is controlled with Dove soap. The vineyard plants clover between rows to feed nitrogen back into the soil, and Pfeiffer says that her vineyard is the only solar-power-operated winery and estate in the south Willamette Valley.

"You can be sustainable but then you can't be carbon neutral, or you can be carbon neutral but not sustainable," Pfeiffer says. "It all depends on what badge you want to wear for your vineyard. So what we do here is try to do the best we can and have the lowest impact possible, and that is really all you can do."

Kent of Salmon Safe, Inc., says the actual certification costs around \$100, but the cost to a vineyard to qualify as salmon-safe differs from vineyard to vineyard. ❖

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